

Human Rights Commission  
Meeting Minutes December 15, 2016  
Bangs Community Center

Members Present: Sovann-Malis Loeung, Matthew Charity, Ingrid Askew, Sid Ferreira

Absent: Carol Ross, Brenda Mutai, Jessica Maposa, Greg Bascomb

Others Present: Deborah Radway, Director of Human Rights, Julie Federman, Public Health and Community Services Director; Prospective member Emily Boutilier, and interested community member Elizabeth Cahn, Thondup Tsering and others from UMASS Students for a Free Tibet.

Meeting called to order at 600 pm

Agenda Additions: none

Introductions- Emily Boutilier introduced as a prospective new member

**Old Business:**

1. Report on Commission Affirmative Action Policy Review

Affirmative Action Sub Committee—Sid, Jessica and Matthew met in the fall and will circulate a draft and have some recommendations so that the Commission can deliberate.

2. Follow-up: Affordable Housing- rental and home ownership:

Affordable Housing- Sid has been unable to attend other Housing Committee meetings but continues to collect anecdotal evidence about how unaffordable Amherst is, for either rent or purchase. He said- People are buying in Holyoke and selling in Amherst to move to Holyoke. We need to be able to invest in where we live. New buildings in town are for rich white folks. Housing is a human right, what are we going to do about it? Matthew-changes to zoning laws to allow more affordable housing to be built? Malis- 4 BR=\$2800; 3 BR=\$2060, 1 BR= \$1,140 in Aspen Chase or Alpine Commons. Questions: What can the Town do to effect the market? What kind of Town do we want? One that is diverse in ideology or one that is diverse in reality? What is the best way to bring these concerns to Town Committees?

3. Human Rights Day

Review of Human Rights Day- Matthew spoke of the event held on the common, revival of 2012 town Meeting vote and Amherst's intent to not participate in federal law enforcement programs relating to immigrant enforcement of Secure Communities or other cooperative agreements in which town personnel cooperate with federal officials to enforce immigration laws. The Universal Declaration is progressive and these rights are fundamental.

Amnesty International HRD Event- Ingrid attended on 10/6—read 3 pieces, met up with woman from Sierra Leone working to end genital mutilation, incorporated her presentation, received donations.

4. Discussion with Public Health and Community Services Director Julie Federman Health and Community Services Director Julie Federman- has worked for town for 21 years. Recently has been involved with meetings for concerned refugees at the Center for New Americans. There is an 8 page document that serves as a firewall between the Amherst police and ICE—HRC wants to bring Chief back to discuss how that works. In intent and spirit, the Amherst PD does not want to turn people in. Matthew-collection of data is a big concern, data will get into hands of people who will share lists. Undocumented students are scared, sanctuary campuses are forming. Amherst has embraced the protections and principles of Sanctuary City without using the term, which is recently created. None of us knows what will happen with new administration other than overriding fear. We need to keep

talking about this to make people feel safer. How can we make Amherst a warmer community when it is bifurcated at all levels of diversity?

### **New Business:**

#### 5. Upcoming Events- MLK Breakfast, Black History Month

- MLK Breakfast- annual event, Malis, Matthew, Sid want to attend.
- Black History Month- request from Alisa Brewer and Judy Brooks to assist with organizing and flag raising on the 18<sup>th</sup> or a date that works for commission. Commission declined to participate as organizers. Ingrid will be in Africa for January and February, returning in March. Carol will assist in updating the flyer/
- Students for a Free Tibet presentation- Thondup Tsering and students made a presentation about the destruction of Larung Gar, monastic Institute for Culture and Religion in Tibet. Chinese are forcing monks and nuns out by demolishing their homes. Requesting to halt demolition, compensate those evicted and allow them to rebuild or join other monasteries. Government wants 5000 of 100000 monks out. Request for Town Human Rights Commission to sign a statement of support. **Ingrid made a motion, seconded by Malis, to authorize Chair Matthew Charity to craft and sign a letter of support on the Commission's behalf. Voted 4-0 in favor.**

#### 6. Discussion on partnership opportunities with Town Committees-

- What do we want to promote thinking on?
- Western New England University is sponsoring a forum on Hate Crimes 2/3/17
- League of Women Voters is collecting information on ethical and useful organizations-let's make sure we don't try to reinvent. Get that information for next meeting

#### 7. Other---**Emily Boutilier** has submitted a CAF to join the Commission. She spoke a little about how the election spurred her into action, wanting to participate in her community, promote and protect equality and human rights and the HRC vacancy seems a good fit for her interests. Has been very interested in tonight's discussion. 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays work for her. Works at Amherst College Communications office as Alumni Magazine editor.

Amherst Resident **Elizabeth Cahn** also attended the meeting. She has not yet completed a CAF but is also interested in the Commission's work. She grew up in Amherst, family was involved in town government, wants to continue the tradition. Has been involved with Cancer Connection and is interested in making sure that Amherst considers equity and inclusion in its daily thinking. Potential future HRC member, and she was encouraged to complete a CAF.

#### 1. 2017 HRC EVENTS CALENDAR: MARK THESE DATES

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|-----------|---|
| • March   | Walk for a New Spring event               |
| • June 17 | Human Rights Heroes picnic at Mill River  |
| • July 4  | Frederick Douglass reading on the Common. |

Adjourn 7:50PM

Deb Radway  
Notetaker